

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 4650

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AS, PINT

SUBJECT: ALP PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS'S JULY 14 MEETING

REF: CANBERRA 04611

1. AS REPORTED IN REFTEL MINISTER OF OVERSEAS TRADE FRANK CREAN WAS ELECTED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER BY THE ALP'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS ON JULY 14 WITH 47 VOTES. THE RUNNER UP WAS MINISTER OF EDUCATION KIM BEAZLEY WITH 31 VOTES. MINISTER OF TOURISM AND RECREATION STEWART HAD 11 VOTES AND ATTORNEY GENERAL ENDERBY RECEIVED 4 VOTES.

2. MHR JOE BERINSTON OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA WAS THEN ELECTED TO THE ALP MINISTRY BY 54 VOTES. DR. J.F. CAIRNS WAS THE RUNNER UP WITH 37 VOTES. BERINSON WAS SWORN IN LATER IN THE EVENING AS MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, REPLACING CAIRNS IN THAT PORTFOLIO.

3. THE CAUCUS MEETING BEGAN THE AFTERNOON BY VOTING 55 TO 33 TO DECLARE THAT THE POSITION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WAS VACANT. DURING THE TWO AND ONE HALF HOURS OF DEBATE PRIOR TO THIS CRUCIAL VOTE ONE ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO REPLACE THE ENTIRE CABINET AND ANOTHER WAS MADE TO

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CENSURE THE PRIME MINISTER. BOTH MOTIONS WERE RULED

OUT OF ORDER ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE CAUCUS COULD NOT CONSIDER BUSINESS WHICH HAD NOT BEEN ON THE AGENDA FOR AT LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE CAUCUS MEETING. SIX OF THE NINE SPEAKERS WHO SPOKE PRIOR TO THIS VOTE ACCUSED THE PRIME MINISTER OF PRE-EMPTING THE AUTHORITY OF THE CAUCUS, TRYING TO EXERT ONE-MAN RULE, DEFYING THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE PARTY AND PREVENTING DR. CAIRNS FROM GETTING A FAIR TRIAL.

4. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM RECEIVED A FAIR AMOUNT OF CRITICISM FROM THE CAUCUS AND HE WILL HAVE TO CONSULT MORE FULLY WITH HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES IN THE FUTURE. HAD LABOR LOST THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS OF JULY 12, HE MAY WELL HAVE FACED A SUCCESSFUL REVOLT IN CAUCUS. WHILE THE ELECTION OF MR. CREAN AS DEPUTY LEADER IS A REBUKE TO THE PRIME MINISTER, CREAN IS A MODERATE, MODEST MAN WHO CAN BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO BRING IN A RESPONSIBLE BUDGET. MHR BERINSON, IS ALSO EXPECTED TO ASSIST IN THESE EFFORTS. MOREOVER, BOTH MEN HAVE CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED MINISTER OF MINERALS AND ENERGY REX CONNOR'S GRANDIOSE SCHEMES TO RAISE OVERSEAS LOANS AND TO PUSH FOR ONE HUNDRED PER CENT AUSTRALIAN OWNERSHIP OF AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESOURCES. WE HAVE LONG SUSPECTED THAT PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAS NEVER BEEN COMFORTABLE WITH CONNOR'S SCHEMES AND WITH HIS STRENGTH IN CABINET AND CAUCUS. OVER THE LONGER TERM IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS STRENGTHENED HIS HAND IN TERMS OF GETTING A CABINET THAT IS WILLING TO TACKLE AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

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